



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

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Governor

**KARYN E. POLITO**  
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**MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH**  
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000  
[www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

September 9, 2020

Dear Friends of Public Health,

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is seeking public comments for the State Plan for the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC) for federal fiscal year 2021. Attached you will find a WIC Nutrition Program summary, which includes federal fiscal year 2020 funding and the 2021 State Plan for your information.

We have scheduled a public hearing on Monday, October 5, 2020 from 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM via WebEx at:

<https://statema.webex.com/statema/j.php?MTID=mfe5e46796ef8ccd4f5612317e83f5925>

You may also call-in to the hearing at:

+1-203-607-0564 US Toll  
+1-866-692-3580 US Toll Free  
Access code: 171 155 3193

Written comments may also be sent to:

Rachel Colchamiro, Director - Nutrition Division  
Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program  
Bureau of Family Health & Nutrition  
250 Washington Street, 6<sup>th</sup> floor  
Boston, MA 02108-4619

Email: [Rachel.colchamiro@mass.gov](mailto:Rachel.colchamiro@mass.gov)

This hearing provides a forum for WIC local programs and agencies as well as other public health professionals and consumers to share their thoughts with the Department concerning priorities for the WIC program. I encourage you to participate on October 5<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions about the public hearing, you may contact me at my email address above. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rachel Colchamiro, MPH, RD, CLC  
Director – Nutrition Division  
Massachusetts WIC Program

## **WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN NUTRITION PROGRAM (WIC) SUMMARY**

**FISCAL YEAR 2020**  
**FEDERAL ALLOCATION**  
**\$77,040,618**  
**STATE BUDGET**  
**\$11,010,000**

The Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program is a federal program supplemented by state funding which serves low and moderate income pregnant and postpartum women, infants and young children certified as medically or nutritionally at risk. A network of 31 local programs with 122 permanent sites, 12 mobile sites and approximately 850 retail stores in communities across the Commonwealth supports WIC activities. All programs are currently providing remote services during the coronavirus emergency.

### **Funded Services:**

- Nutrition education and counseling
- Breastfeeding education and support
- Dietary assessment and certification for program benefits
- Information and referral to, and coordination with, other health & social service programs
- Childhood immunization assessment and follow up
- Benefits for nutritious foods
- Farmers' Market coupons for fresh produce

WIC works in collaboration with community health care providers and other local health and human service agencies to provide coordinated, comprehensive services to families in need during a critical time in a child's development. Studies show that participation in WIC reduces infant mortality and morbidity and improves participant health outcomes. WIC participation also has a positive impact on preschoolers' diets and is associated with cognitive and academic benefits.

The Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program functions as a major service component within the Nutrition Division of the Bureau of Family Health & Nutrition (BFHN), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EHS). WIC program services are responsive to family and community needs, sensitive to cultural and ethnic differences, and oriented to the prevention of health problems and the improvement of health outcomes. The program collaborates with the other nutrition programs in the Nutrition Division—the Growth and Nutrition Program and the Metabolic Food and Formula Program – and works directly with the other maternal and child health programs in the BFHN. Particularly, WIC coordinates with program services in the Divisions of Pregnancy, Infancy and Early Childhood, Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs, and Early Intervention and with programs in the Bureau of Community Health and Prevention, including those in its Divisions of Health Access and Violence & Injury Prevention, as well as with its Prevention and Wellness Division on obesity and physical activity initiatives.

WIC also coordinates activities on issues affecting women and children with other DPH Bureaus and offices: — Substance Addiction Services, Tobacco Cessation, HIV/AIDS, and Health Equity, as well as with Immunization and Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention. Strong intra-agency networking and lateral communication with other DPH programs and committees on key initiatives—such as infant mortality, safe sleep, parenting support, obesity and wellness—ensure integrated policy and program development, planning and implementation.

Quality nutrition services focusing on individual service needs form the centerpiece of the program. The WIC Nutrition Program stresses the importance of good nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood for optimal growth and development. Particular emphasis is placed on providing services to high-risk populations, including prenatal and breastfeeding women, medically or nutritionally at risk infants and children, members of ethnic minority groups, new immigrants, and pregnant adolescents.

The State WIC Office works in collaboration with the greater Massachusetts WIC community – local WIC agencies and staff, WIC Advisory Council, WIC Vendor Advisory Council and Medical Advisory Board members, authorized stores, participants, and advocates to identify challenges, develop solutions and affect change for program improvement. The State WIC Office also maintains the web-based computer system—with personal computers and laptops used at local programs—that produces electronic benefits for participants. Federal regulations, monitoring and evaluation requirements of local WIC programs and vendors are critical components of WIC Nutrition Program operations.

State and federal dollars provide funding for contracted WIC services in the community to serve the current statewide monthly caseload of over 112,000 participants. Local program attainment of service levels beyond this level depends on intensified outreach activities, increased productivity, staff, space, and computer equipment capacity as well as local economic conditions. The rate of inflation in WIC food costs, the levels of federal and supplemental state funding, and the infant formula rebate continue to be the critical determinants of the number of participants WIC is able to serve.

Through strong support of its WIC program, Massachusetts is in the forefront of providing basic nutritional assistance to needy children. Following a 1983 DPH study of nutritional status of low-income children, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to provide supplemental funds to WIC; seven other states are currently following this example. In 1993, Massachusetts enacted The Childhood Hunger Relief Act—landmark legislation that provides for full funding to guarantee that all eligible infants, children and pregnant and postpartum women may participate in WIC. Full funding makes Massachusetts the first state in the nation to ensure WIC services to 85% of all individuals estimated as eligible by the Massachusetts WIC Needs Assessment.

### **Priorities:**

The Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program seeks input from the public regarding priorities for the program. The program goals present a starting point for review and discussion in formulating the program priorities for the FY2021 State Plan. Each chapter of the State Plan program goals corresponds to a working unit within the State WIC Office. Sections' priorities are highlighted with corresponding objectives following each goal.